FEAR

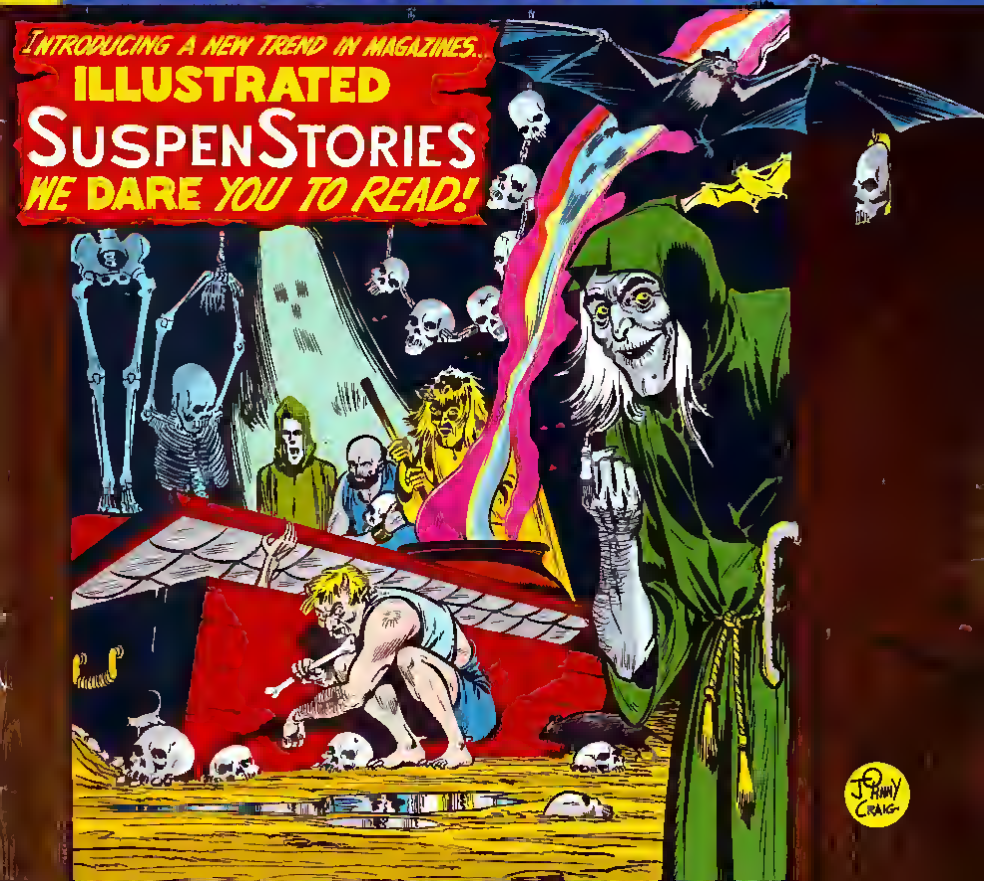
HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

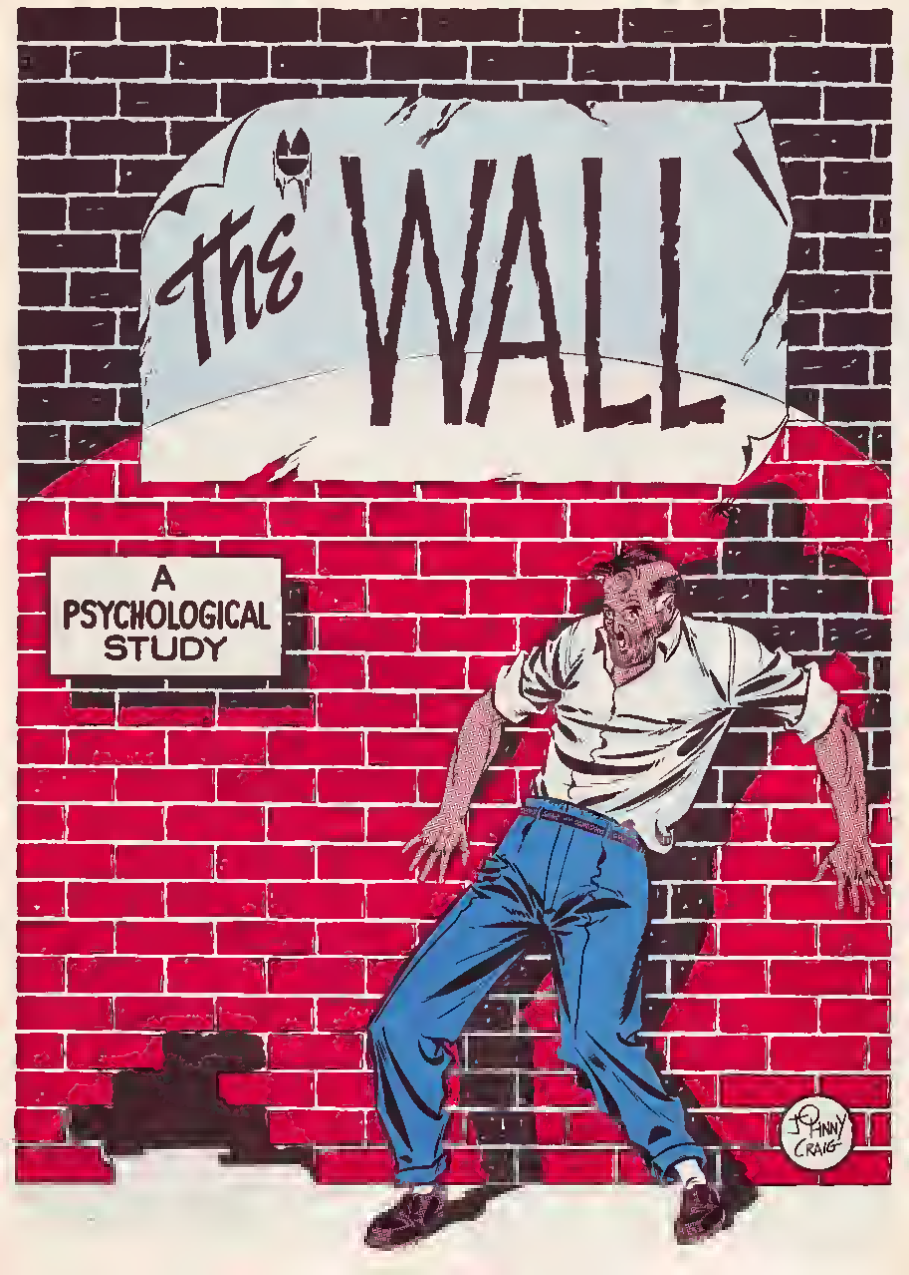
THE HAUNT OF FEAR

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

NO.15
MAY - JUNE
A.K.A.
NO.1

REPRINT EDITION



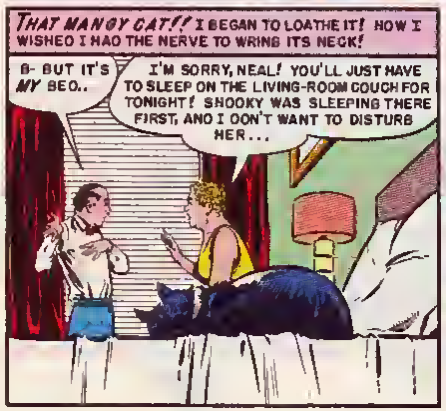

THE WALL
A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY
JOHNNY CRAIG

MY NAME IS NEAL HARPER. CLARA AND I WERE A HAPPILY MARRIED COUPLE... ONCE! BUT SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF SNOOKY, HATE SEEPED INTO THE HOUSEHOLD AND SLOWLY BEGAN TO DISINTERGRATE OUR LOVE. I WAS FRUSTRATED AT EVERY MOVE AT EVERY TURN... AND SNOOKY WAS ALWAYS TO BLAME!..YOU SEE, SNOOKY WAS CLARA'S PET CAT...
DON'T SAY "NO" TO ME, YOU WORM! I DON'T CARE HOW FAR IT IS TO THE GROCERS! YOU GO! SNOOKY WANTS SOME MILK BEFORE I PUT HER TO BED!
Y-YES, DEAR... I'M SORRY...I... I'LL GO...

AND THAT'S HOW IT WAS! CLARA'S LOVE AND AFFECTION WERE NOW CENTERED ON SNOOKY... AND I WAS LITERALLY "OUT IN THE COLD!"
GROCERY

IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME...
NEAL HARPER, DON'T YOU DARE GO NEAR YOUR CHAIR WHILE SNOOKY IS SITTING IN IT!
YES, DEAR...

I WASN'T THE BOLD, ASSERTIVE TYPE WHO WOULD FIGHT BACK...PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE DONE MUCH GOOD ANYWAY... NOT AGAINST CLARA...
YOU PUT THAT CREAM RIGHT BACK WHERE YOU FOUND IT! IT'S SNOOKY'S! I BOUGHT SKIM MILK FOR YOU!
YES, DEAR...


THAT MANGY CAT!! I BEGAN TO LOATHE IT! HOW I WISHED I HAD THE NERVE TO WRING ITS NECK!
B- BUT IT'S MY BED..
I'M SORRY, NEAL! YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SLEEP ON THE LIVING-ROOM COUCH FOR TONIGHT! SNOOKY WAS SLEEPING THERE FIRST, AND I DON'T WANT TO DISTURB HER...

...ALWAYS THE SAME! DON'T DO THIS! DON'T DO THAT! SNOOKY THIS, SNOOKY THAT! AND IT CONTINUALLY GREW WORSE UNTIL I HATED THAT CAT SO MUCH, IT NEARLY DROVE ME TO FRENZY!
SNOOKY! CATS! SNOOKY CATS! SNOOKY SNOOKY SNOOKY SNOOKY

HMM-M... I STARTED THIS BOOK SOME TIME AGO! I THINK I'LL FINISH IT TONIGHT...
GET OUT OF MY CHAIR, YOU CONFOUNDED CAT!
NEAL!
YOU BEAST! PICKING ON POOR LIDDEW SNOOKY! COME HERE, YOU POOR THING...
SNOOKY! SNOOKY! SNOOKY! THAT'S ALL I HEAR AROUND THIS PLACE! YOU AND YOUR BLASTED CAT! YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY!
IS MY LIDDEW SNOOKY ALL RIGHT NOW? POOR DARLING, YOU'RE SO FRIGHTENED, AREN'T YOU? POOR, POOR SNOOKY...
"POOR, POOR SNOOKY!" HA! SHE'S CAUSED NOTHING BUT TROUBLE EVER SINCE SHE CAME HERE, AND I'M GOING TO STOP IT ONCE AND FOR ALL!
THUD!
CLARA CLARA CLARA!
SHE'S DEAD!
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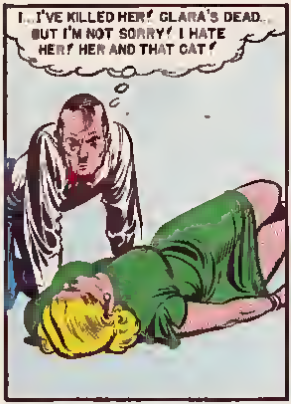
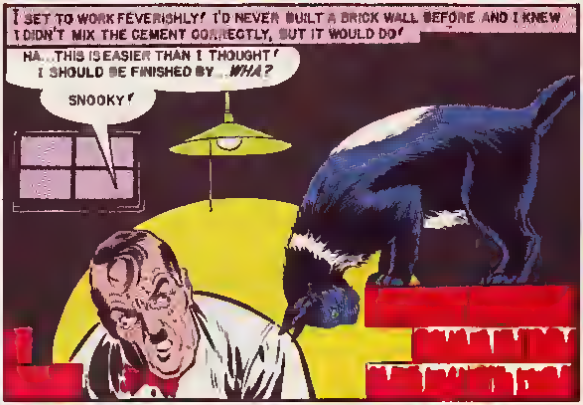

I...I'VE KILLED HER! CLARA'S DEAD... BUT I'M NOT SORRY! I HATE HER! HER AND THAT CAT!

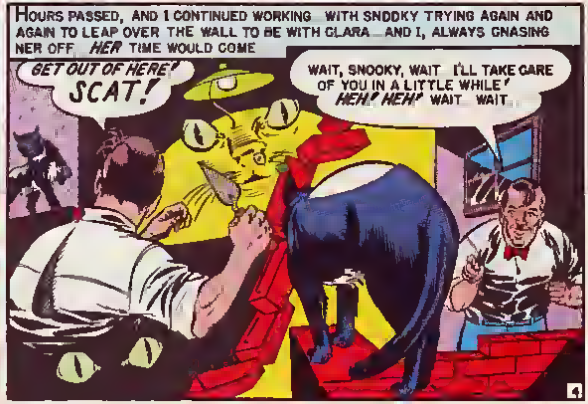
BUT I'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF HER BODY...TAKE IT DOWN THE CELLAR...MAYBE THROW HER IN THE FURNACE...

?

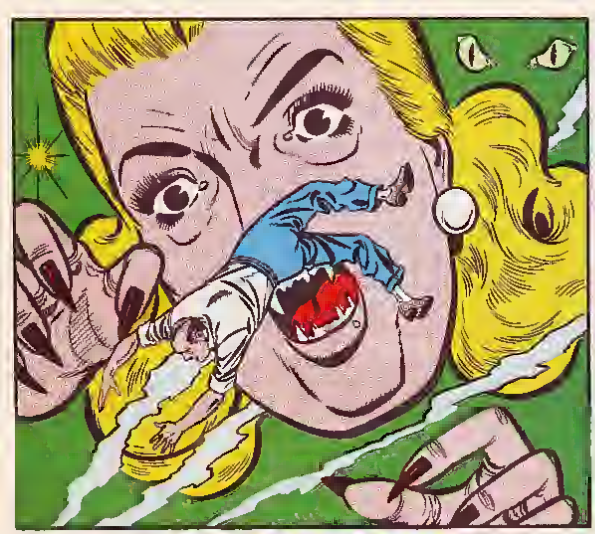
BRICKS! OF COURSE! I'LL BUILD A BRICK WALL...AND SEAL HER DEAD BODY BEHIND IT!


I SET TO WORK FEVERISHLY! I'D NEVER BUILT A BRICK WALL BEFORE AND I KNEW I DIDN'T MIX THE CEMENT CORRECTLY, BUT IT WOULD DO!
HA...THIS IS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT! I SHOULD BE FINISHED BY...WHA?
SNOOKY!

GWUXXN! CAT! STOP TRYING TO GET BEHIND THIS WALL! CLARA CAN'T COODLE YOU ANYMORE! CLARA'S DEAD!

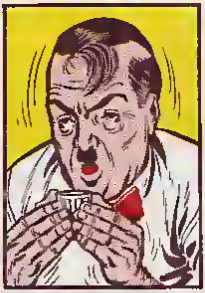

HOURS PASSED, AND I CONTINUED WORKING WITH SNOOKY TRYING AGAIN AND AGAIN TO LEAP OVER THE WALL TO BE WITH CLARA...AND I, ALWAYS CHASING HER OFF...HER TIME WOULD COME
GET OUT OF HERE! SCAT!
WAIT, SNOOKY, WAIT I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU IN A LITTLE WHILE! HEH! HEH! WAIT WAIT...

THERE! I'M FINISHED! I FEEL BETTER NOW THAT SHE'S OUT OF THE WAY! HA! NOW TO FIND SNOOKY AND KILL HER...
I SEARCHED THE HOUSE FROM CELLAR TO ATTIC! I COULDN'T FIND SNOOKY! AGAIN I SEARCHED... MORE CAREFULLY THIS TIME, AND STILL COULDN'T FIND HER! SHE WASN'T IN THE HOUSE...
BLAST IT! WHERE IS THAT CAT?! NOT IN THE HOUSE... I RANSACKED THIS PLACE SEVERAL TIMES WAIT!
THE WALL!... THE WALL WHERE CLARA IS BURIED! SNOOKY WAS TRYING TO GET BEHIND IT... MAYBE SHE SNEAKED OVER THE WALL WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING... ???
THAT MUST BE WHAT HAPPENED! SNOOKY WANTED TO BE WITH CLARA! HA! HA! NOW THEY'LL BE TOGETHER... FOREVER! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
SUDDENLY I FELT EXHAUSTED NOW THAT IT WAS ALL OVER I BEGAN TO TREMBLE SLIGHTLY! THE FEAR OF KILLING CLARA AND SNOOKY WAS NOW OVERTAKING ME...
I... I MUST CONTROL MYSELF!... NEED REST... I'LL... I'LL SLEEP... GO TO BED!
FULLY CLOTHED, I COLLAPSED ON THE BED AND INSTANTLY WAS ASLEEP. BUT I SLEPT FITFULLY, BEING PLAGUED BY TERRIFYING NIGHTMARES OF CLARA... AND CATS!



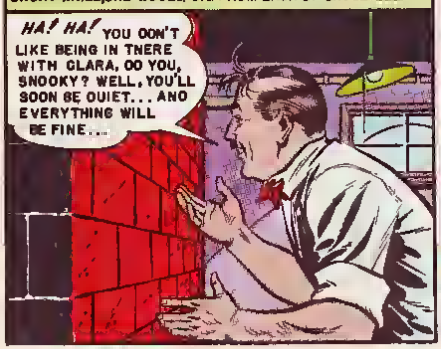
I AWOKE NEXT MORNING... I FELT WRETCHED. I HAD SLEPT LONG, BUT NOT WELL... NOT WELL AT ALL!

OHH--H...THOSE DREAMS! THEY COMPLETELY UNNERVED ME! I... I'M A NERVOUS WRECK! MAYBE A DRINK WILL HELP...



A CAT! I'D HEARD A CAT! SNOOKY WAS CALLING FOR HER FREEDOM... FOR HER *LIFE!* SHE KNEW THAT IN A SHORT WHILE, SHE WOULD DIE FROM LACK OF OXYGEN...

HA! HA! YOU DON'T LIKE BEING IN THERE WITH CLARA, DO YOU, SNOOKY? WELL, YOU'LL SOON BE QUIET... AND EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE...



BUT SNOOKY *DIDN'T* KEEP QUIET! SHE YOWLED AND SCREAMED INTERMINABLY... *SHE WOULDN'T DIE!* DAY AFTER DAY, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, I HEARD HER PIERCING WAILS UNTIL MY NERVES WERE ON THE VERGE OF SPLITTING...

SHUT UP, DO YOU HEAR? SHUT UP, IN THERE! STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP IT!

SHE WOULDN'T STOP! SNOOKY WAS CRYING OUT HER LIVIO HATE FOR ME! SHE WOULDN'T DIE! SHE WOULDN'T *DIE!* AND NO MATTER WHERE I WENT IN THE HOUSE, I HEARD HER SCREAMING HER RAGE AT ME

ME-EYOW! MER-ROWER-R! MEE-YOW! MER-ROW-MEE ME-EYOW! MEE-YOW! MERROWER! MER-ROWERR!

I COULDN'T STAND IT! FINALLY, I DECIDED I WOULD HAVE TO KILL HER MYSELF. I WENT TO THE CELLAR.

THERE! I'VE KNOCKED OUT ONE BRICK DOWN BY THE FLOOR. I'LL REACH IN, GRAB THAT CAT...AND *THROTTLE* HER!

I STRETCHED MY ARM THROUGH THE OPENING...A TIGHT SQUEEZE...

MY HAND GROPED ABOUT SEARCHINGLY ...TRYING TO GRASP THE CAT...

AND THEN...

OUCH!

SHE BIT ME! THEN IN QUICK SUCCESSION, HER CLAWS RIPPED THROUGH MY FLESH, HER FANGS GNAWED MY HAND AND FINGERS! *I SCREAMED!*

HELP! MY ARM! I CAN'T GET MY ARM OUT! HELP!

MY ARM WAS BEING RIPPED AND TORN! I FELT WAVES OF KNIFING PAIN SURGE THROUGH ME. WARM BLOOD TRICKLED OVER MY ARM, THROUGH MY FINGERS! WARM, STICKY! SNOOKY WOULDN'T LET GO! SHE HAD ME AND WAS GOING TO *KILL* ME! I COULDN'T GET FREE! *SHE WAS TEARING ME TO SHREDS!!*

HELP! HELP!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
OFFICERS! SOMEONE! HELP ME! SNOOKY... EATING MY ARM TO PIECES!... HELP! PLEASE! GET ME FREE! I'LL DIE!
OKAY, MISTER! GRAB THAT PICK, JOE! WE'LL HAVE TO KNOCK DOWN THAT BRICK WALL!
TAKE IT EASY, MISTER... WE'LL HAVE YOUR ARM FREE IN A JIFFY!
HURRY! I'M BEING EATEN ALIVE! I'M... ???
?
SNOOKY...
OKAY, BUD! YOU CAN PULL YOUR ARM FREE NOW...
SNOOKY... WASN'T BEHIND THE WALL! WASN'T EVEN IN THE HOUSE! OUT HAVING KITTENS! SNOOKY'S PIERCING SHRIEKS THEY WERE ONLY IN MY MIND! I... I ONLY IMAGINED THEM!
THIS GUY'S BATTY! THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HIS ARM AT ALL!
HEY, LOOK! THIS CAT JUST CAME IN WITH HER NEW LITTER OF KITTENS! HERE, KITTY, KITTY...
NEVER MIND THE CAT, JOE! WE HAVE TO TAKE THIS GUY DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS! THERE'S A CORPSE BEHIND THIS WALL!
-THE END-

IT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL FRATERNITY INITIATION EVER SEEN ON THE CAMPUS. . . OR ON ANY OTHER CAMPUS, FOR THAT MATTER! THE THREE PLEDGEES WERE TAKEN OUT TO THE OLD PALMER HOME ON THAT INFAMOUS NIGHT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, AND INSTEAD OF THE PLACE BEING AMUSINGLY HAUNTED, IT TURNED INTO A---

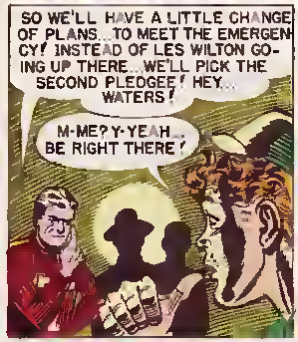
HOUSE OF HORROR

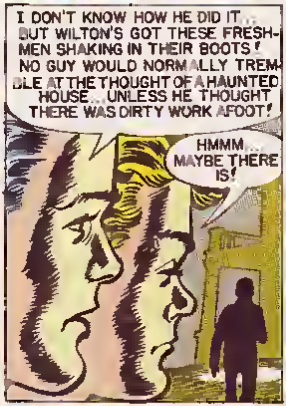
IT WAS ON A NIGHT IN 1934 THAT THIS STRANGE TALE HAD ITS BEGINNING! TODAY, FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, THERE IS STILL NO EXPLANATION FOR WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PALMER PLACE!

...AND AS THE LAST STEP IN YOUR HAZING, BOYS...YOU'LL HAVE TO PASS THE TEST OF COURAGE! A LONELY JOURNEY INTO THE OLD PALMER PLACE...WHICH LEGEND TELLS US IS *HAUNTED!*
EACH ONE OF YOU WILL FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS I GAVE ON THE RIDE OUT HERE! IF ANYONE WANTS TO DROP OUT NOW...LET HIM SPEAK UP OR SHUT HIS MOUTH FOR-EVER! EVERYONE READY...?
Y-YES...I-I GUESS) SO...
HERE'S YOUR LIGHT, HENDERSON... YOU MIGHT AS WELL START THE BALL ROLLING! AND REST AS-SURED OF ONE THING, BOYS... THIS IS NO SCHOOLBOY PRANK...AS YOU'LL SOON LEARN! HEH, HEH!
WAVE THAT LANTERN AT US FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND LANDINGS, HENDERSON... AND JUST *COOL* YOUR HEELS IN THE ATTIC TILL I COME UP FOR YOU IF YOU'RE NOT ALREADY BATHED IN *COLD* SWEAT, THAT IS!
YOU'RE DRIVING THESE FRESHMEN PRETTY HARD, LES...YOU MUST HAVE GIVEN THIS PLACE QUITE A BUILD-UP, BECAUSE THEY LOOKED SCARED TO DEATH! FROM THE LOOK IN HENDERSON'S EYE...HE'D KILL YOU IN A MINUTE IF HE HAD THE CHANCE!
T-THERE HE IS NOW, WAVING THAT LANTERN AT THE FIRST FLOOR WINDOW!
NOW THE FUN STARTS! I WENT THROUGH THAT PLACE LAST WEEK...RIGGED A FEW CON-TRAPTIONS FOR THE BOYS TO TRIP OVER! OUGHT TO BE GOOD FOR SOME LAUGHS BEFORE THE EVE-NING'S OVER!
THERE HE IS AGAIN... POOR KID MUST HAVE RAN ALL THE WAY UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR! AS IF THERE WAS A A GHOST BEHIND 'IM!
2

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN GHOSTS BEHIND 'IM BOYS HEH, HEH!
ONE OF 'EM MAY HAVE GOTTEN HENDERSON THEN 'CAUSE IT'S BEEN SEVERAL MINUTES SINCE WE SAW HIM AT THE SECOND FLOOR...AND IT DOESN'T TAKE THAT LONG TO GET UP TO THE ATTIC!

JUST A BOYISH PRANK, THAT'S ALL! THINKS HE'LL TURN THE TABLES AND SCARE US A BIT! PROBABLY SITTING UP THERE IN THE ATTIC, WAITING TO JUMP OUT AND YELL BOO AT ME WHEN I COME UP TO RELIEVE HIM!


SO WE'LL HAVE A LITTLE CHANGE OF PLANS...TO MEET THE EMERGENCY! INSTEAD OF LES WILTON GOING UP THERE...WE'LL PICK THE SECOND PLEDGEE! HEY... WATERS!
M-ME? Y-YEAH... BE RIGHT THERE!


I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT... BUT WILTON'S GOT THESE FRESHMEN SHAKING IN THEIR BOOTS! NO GUY WOULD NORMALLY TREMBLE AT THE THOUGHT OF A HAUNTED HOUSE...UNLESS HE THOUGHT THERE WAS DIRTY WORK AFOOT!
HMMM... MAYBE THERE IS!

HEH HEH! LOOK AT HIS FACE, WILL YOU! IMAGINE THAT, A GROWN MAN, SHAKING LIKE A TEEN-AGE GAL GOING PAST A GRAVEYARD!
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT I WOULDN'T LIKE THIS SET-UP MYSELF!

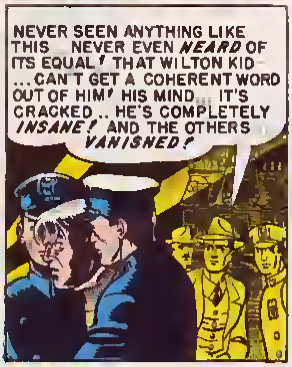
WHAT IN THE WORLD DID YOU DO TO THAT HOUSE, WILTON? THESE BOYS HAVE A LOOK OF ABSOLUTE DREAD ON THEIR FACES!
AW, IT'S NOTHING! JUST A COUPLA LOOSE STEPS A FEW COBWEBS SOME SQUEAKY DOORS

I-IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN WATERS NEVER REACHED THAT ATTIC WINDOW! I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS
AW THEY PROBABLY TURNED RIGHT AROUND FROM THE SECOND FLOOR, AN WE'LL FIND 'EM HIDING NEAR THE FRONT DOOR! IF THESE GUYS HAVEN'T THE GUTS TO GO UP THERE, THEN THEY'RE NOT FIT TO BE GAMMA DELTAS!

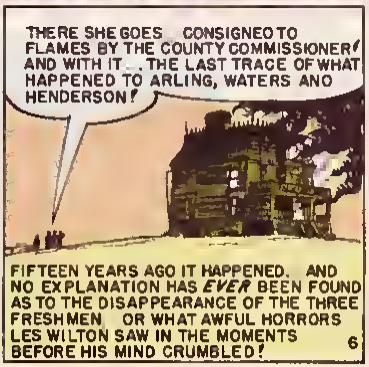
YOU...ARLING...C'MON OVER HERE! YOU'RE NEXT, MAN. GO UP TO THAT ATTIC AND TELL THOSE PALS OF YOURS TO STOP THEIR MONKEY-SHINES! THIS IS A FRATERNITY INITATION...NOT A SCHOOLBOY PRANK!
I-I DON'T THINK I... I C...CARE! YOU'LL GO ALL RIGHT... OR THEY'LL FIND YOU IN A DITCH! I DIDN'T RIG UP THIS PLACE JUST TO HAVE A COUPLA PUNKS SPOIL OUR FUN! IF THE THREE OF YOU ARE PLANNING TO GIVE *ME* A SCARE...YOU'LL REGRET IT!
W..WE DIDN'T PLAN ANY JOKES LIKE T...THAT! AND I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS... IT'S N... NOT LIKE WATERS AND HENDERSON TO FOOL AROUND! B...BUT I'LL GO!
SPOKEN LIKE A REAL GAMMA DELT-TO BE!
HEH, HEH! LOOK AT 'IM SHAKING! BET THE OTHER TWO'LL HAVE A BIG SURPRISE FOR ARLING... THINKING IT'S THEIR BELOVED LES WILTON!
MAYBE THE KID'S RIGHT, LES ...MAYBE SOMETHING *DID* GO WRONG UP THERE!
RATS! NOTHING'S WRONG UP THERE... ARLING'S AT THE FIRST FLOOR SAFE AND SOUND! FROM THE LOOK ON HIS FACE HE MUST HAVE STUMBLED OVER THAT SKELETON I BORROWED FROM THE LAB, TOO!
HE'S AT THE SECOND FLOOR...
ON HIS WAY TO THE ATTIC! HOLD YOUR BREATH, BOYS.. HERE'S WHERE THE *REAL* FUN BEGINS.. IN THE NEXT SIXTY SECONDS.
FIVE MINUTES, WILTON...AND NO SIGN OF ARLING! ALL THREE OF 'EM.. *GONE!*
THE STUPID PUNKS...TOO YELLOW TO TAKE THAT LAST FLIGHT OF STEPS! I'LL SHOW 'EM *REAL* FEAR.

GIMME THAT LIGHT, JENKINS... I'LL GO UP THERE MYSELF! FIRST TO PROVE TO ALL OF YOU THAT THERE'S NO DANGER UP THERE... AND SECOND, TO KICK THOSE GUYS OUT OF THAT PLACE... AND OUT OF THE GAMMA DELTA!
MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE LET WILTON PLAN THIS WHOLE INITIATION BY HIMSELF! HE'S LIABLE TO GO OVERBOARD ON THIS HAZING BUSINESS...THE BOYS IN THAT HOUSE MAY HAVE HURT THEMSELVES!
FOR ALL WE KNOW HE MIGHT HAVE STUCK SOME RATTLESNAKES IN THE OLD DUMP!
CRASH!
W...WHAT TH...?
I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T LIKE THIS WHOLE SET-UP! THE WINDOW...IT'S BEEN SMASHED!
I...IT'S WILTON...
THOUGHT I'D INJECT A LITTLE EXCITEMENT INTO THIS INITIATION... DO I LOOK ANY THE WORSE FOR WEAR?
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT HERE ON THE SECOND FLOOR EITHER
CRASH
THE SECONDS TICKED BY IN THAT LONELY AREA KNOWN AS PALMER'S PLACE... SECONDS BECAME MINUTES ... AND THE MINUTES STRETCHED INTERMINABLY
FIFTEEN MINUTES SINCE WE SAW WILTON!
T... THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG UP THERE!
SOMETHING'S GOING ON IN THAT HOUSE THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT! AND THE WAY THOSE THREE FRESHMAN HATED WILTON... THEY MAY HAVE GIVEN HIM A BAD BEATING!
I... I HOPE IT'S ONLY THAT! LET'S HURRY!

WITHIN HALF-AN-HOUR THE POLICE HAD ARRIVED AT PALMER'S PLACE... AND A THROUGH SEARCH OF THE PREMISES REVEALED ONE STARTLING FACT.



AGAIN AND AGAIN THE POLICE SEARCHED THE BUILDING THE NEXT FEW DAYS BUT NO FURTHER INFORMATION WAS UNCOVERED... AND THEN, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER THE NIGHT OF HORROR...



OUT OF THE GRAVE

The Thing stirred slowly, the dirt against its mouth and body. It pushed upward, clawing. Slowly the earth gave way, and clean fresh air seeped down into the shallow grave . . .

He got to his feet clumsily. Stood erect in the moonlight, seeing the trees all around him, hearing the croaking of the bullfrogs by the lake-shore. The wind rustled his rotting garments. He lifted his head, stood listening. He could not hear that cry now. But down there, down in that shallow grave where he had lain for weeks, he had heard a scream. A scream that made him seek the open air.

He was dead. He knew that. But inside him there was a power that let him move, that stirred his rotting legs and arms, that let his sightless eyes see and his shredded ears hear.

Who was he? He did not remember his name, or anything about himself. The fact that he could see and walk, that something had summoned him, was all he could know.

He moved forward at a stumbling walk. He must find whatever it was that brought him back from the dead, that made him walk the earth again, a horrible figment from a distorted nightmare.

When he came to the lake, he stared at his reflection in the limpid, still waters. He had no nose, and bits of flesh clung here and there to whitened skull that was beginning to show through. Where his eyes should have been, there were only twin black hollows. And his teeth gleamed white and hungry, because he had no lips.

He lifted his head. This time he heard it. A scream!

He started straight toward it, walking into the cold water, not feeling it. He stumbled over submerged logs and rocks, but he kept walking at that slow, steady pace. Stumbling forward, always moving.

* * *

The man tied a gag around her lips so she could not scream again. He said, "It's all over, Marie. No sense yelling. No one can hear you in these woods. That's why my little cabin here comes in so handy. I -ah- write finish to a few of my better jobs."

"Jim," the girl whimpered, arching her neck to avoid the gag. "Jim will save me. You can't kill me . . . Jim will save me."

The man laughed. "Jim is dead, Marie. I killed him. If I hadn't finished *him*, maybe I couldn't get rid of *you*. He would come after me . . . try to get revenge. This way, it's safe."

"Jim said he would protect me. That . . . *wherever he was* . . he would know when I was in danger and come to save me!"

The man tied the gag so she could not speak again. Her wrists and legs were tied to a heavy log chair. The man stood back and nodded.

"With you out of the way, Marie, your inheritance will revert to me,

your cousin. It will be very legal. I will wait seven years and have you declared legally dead. In the meantime, I will enjoy the estate as its trustee. I will not hurry. I am not too greedy. No one will ever know I killed you!"

The man went to a coal stove and lifted out a pine branch smeared with pitch. The branch was flaming, the red tongues of fire casting a scarlet glow around the room. He went and touched the blazing branch to the tiny bed, to the rug on the floor and the curtains on the window. The room caught fire. It swirled up, hot and eager, eating the logs and the furniture. He had prepared well. Everything was drenched in kerosene.

The man tossed the burning tree-limb on the floor. He backed out the door; stood there a minute, watching the fire leap and roar.

"Two and a half million dollars," he said to the wide-eyed, almost fainting girl. "That's what I'm getting out of this. I buried your Jim a few miles back in the densest part of these woods. Maybe the fire I'm starting will burn him too . . . because the woods will go up like paper!"

The heat was awful. The man turned and ran.

From the fringe of the trees, he saw the Thing coming at its stumbling, shambling gait. The Thing was looking at the burning cabin. It did not see him. The man put his hands over his mouth. He was sick. He whimpered, "Jim . . ."

* * *

The Thing went into the fire. He did not feel it licking at his clothes, at his rotting flesh. He was dead. He could not feel anything.

There! Right in front of him. He did not know the girl had fainted mercifully just before he came in the door. He did not remember who the girl was. All he knew was that a long time ago, in a different world, he had promised that no harm would come to her!

He picked the girl up, chair and all. He turned and went toward the door. His clothes flamed. His hair was gone. Even the dried strips of flesh still clinging to his body were charred. Here and there a white bit of bone protruded. Where the fire had touched the bone, it was black and scorched.

The man crouching in the underbrush screamed and screamed. He screamed as the Thing put the girl down far away from the fire. He screamed as the Thing turned its fleshless face toward him. He screamed and tried to flee as the Thing shambled toward him.

The Thing picked him up and held him clutched to the rotting chest. He went at his steady, remorseless pace, onward and onward, through the forest, carrying the man who would have inherited two and a half million dollars.

The man tried to fight, but the Thing was strong. He held the man easily.

He was still holding him when he came back to the grave. The Thing fell on top of the man, pinned him in the grave with his heavy weight.

And the Thing began, with one rotting hand, to fill the grave with loosened dirt, burying them both.

It did not take long to fill the grave. Before long, there would be two dead men in it. It was nice to have company down here where everything was cold and black.

After a while the screaming stopped. . . .

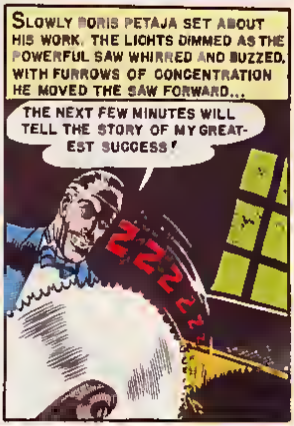
BORIS PETAJA WAS SKILLED IN THE TRICKS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN MAGIC. HIS HANDS MOVED AND HIS VOICE CALLED ON THE SPIRITS TO AID HIM. DEEP DOWN IN HIS BRAIN, SOMETHING STIRRED AND WHISPERED, THAT HIS MAGIC WAS NOT FAKED...BUT REAL! AND BROODING, BORIS PETAJA BECAME...
THE MAD MAGICIAN
AS HE BOWED TO THE APPLAUSE OF A CHEERING AUDIENCE, THE MAGICIAN SMILED COLDLY TO HIMSELF...
FOOLS! IF THEY ONLY KNEW THAT WHAT THEY THINK IS TRICKERY CAN BE DONE JUST AS WELL WITHOUT STAGE PROPS!
I SHALL PROVE IT TO THE WORLD...I, BORIS PETAJA! TONIGHT I WILL SAW A MAN IN TWO...AND THEN PUT HIM TOGETHER AGAIN...WITH NO FALSE BOTTOMED CABINET TO HELP ME!
STAGE ENTRANCE
WOOD MADISON

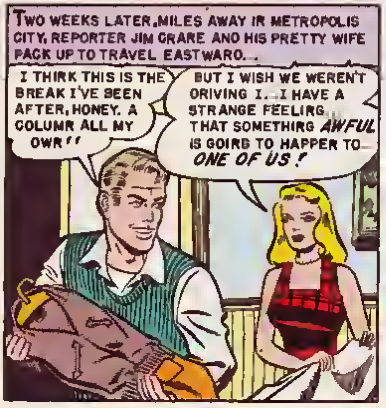
FAR UP IR THE HILLS BEYOND METRO POLIB CITY, A STORE-WALLEO MAR-SION RESTLEO. ITS EYRIES SWARMED WITH BATS WITHIR ITS WALLS. FROM TIME TO TIME, SCREAMS OF AGORY HAD BEER HEARO...

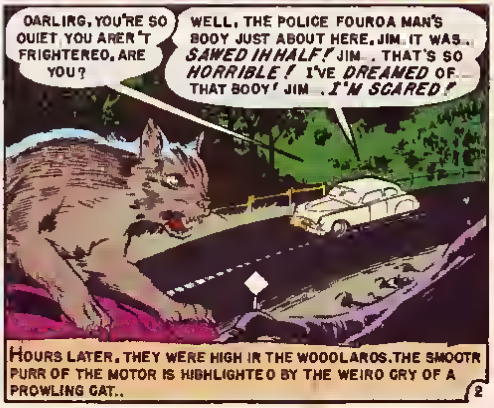
TONIGHT IS THE BIG EXPERIMENT! THE MAN I DRUGGED ON THAT MOUNTAIN ROAD IS IN CHAINS... AWAITING THE TEST. THE POWER IS ON FULL. THE ELECTRIC SAW HAS BEEN SHARPENED!

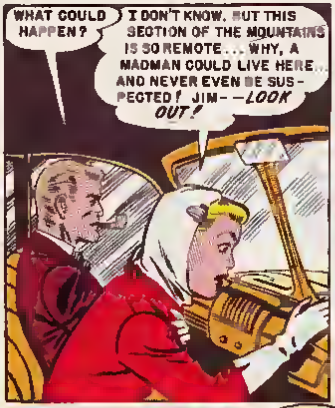
GOOD EVENING, SIR. I HURRIED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! NOW WE WILL BEGIN...
LOOK, MISTER, PLEASE... LEMME GO! I DON'T WANT TO BE FAMOUS LIKE YOU TOLD ME... I DON'T WANNA GET SAWED IN HALF!

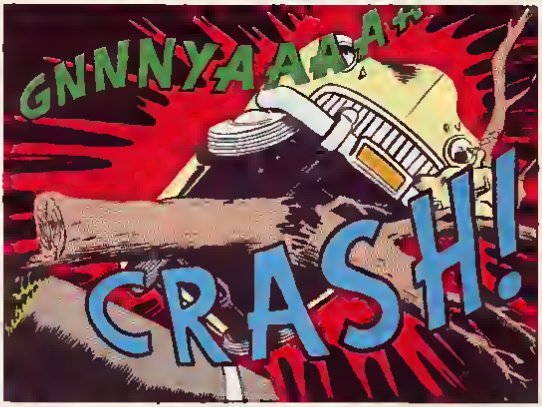
DO YOU DOUBT MY MAGICAL POWERS? I SAY YOU WILL NOT BE HURT! MY POWER IS SUCH THAT EVEN AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN SAWED IN HALF, YOU WILL BE ALIVE AND WELL!


SLOWLY BORIS PETAJA SET ABOUT HIS WORK. THE LIGHTS DIMMED AS THE POWERFUL SAW WHIRRED AND BUZZED, WITH FURROWS OF CONCENTRATION HE MOVED THE SAW FORWARD...
THE NEXT FEW MINUTES WILL TELL THE STORY OF MY GREATEST SUCCESS!
ZZZZZZ


TWO WEEKS LATER, MILES AWAY IR METROPOLIS CITY, REPORTER JIM GRARE AND HIS PRETTY WIFE PACK UP TO TRAVEL EASTWARD...
I THIRK THIS IS THE BREAK I'VE BEEN AFTER, HONEY. A COLUMR ALL MY OWR''
BUT I WISH WE WEREN'T ORIVING I... I HAVE A STRANGE FEELING THAT SOMETHING AWFUL IS GOIRG TO HAPPER TO ONE OF US!


OARLIRG, YOU'RE SO QUIET. YOU AREN'T FRIGHTERED, ARE YOU?
WELL, THE POLICE FOUROA MAN'S BODY JUST ABOUT HERE, JIM. IT WAS... SAWED IH HALF! JIM... THAT'S SO HORRIBLE! I'VE DREAMED OF THAT BODY! JIM... I'M SCARED!
HOURS LATER, THEY WERE HIGH IR THE WOODLAROS. THE SMOOTR PURR OF THE MOTOR IS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE WEIRD CRY OF A PROWLING CAT...


WHAT COULD HAPPEN?
I DON'T KNOW. BUT THIS SECTION OF THE MOUNTAINS IS SO REMOTE... WHY, A MADMAN COULD LIVE HERE... AND NEVER EVEN BE SUSPECTED! JIM--LOOK OUT!

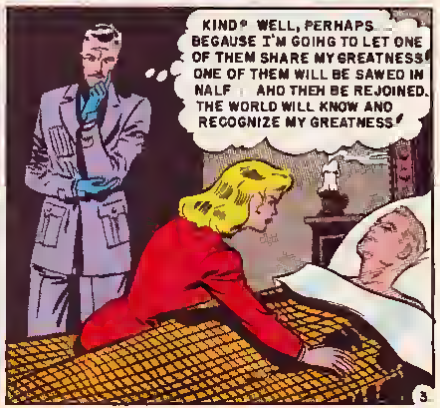

GNNNYAAAAA
CRASH!

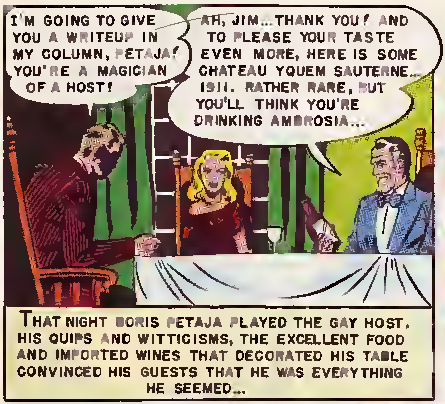
COULDN'T STOP...
AGGHH!

LESS THAN A MILE AWAY...
A CRASH! SCREAMS! WHY, THAT SOUNDS AS IF SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE LANDED IN OUR LITTLE TRAP! COME, CZAR! COME, CAESAR! TO YOUR WORK!

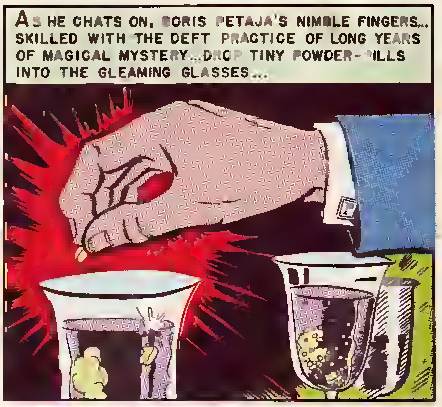
YOU'VE HAD AN ACCIDENT, BUT MY HOME IS NEARBY. COME, LET ME HELP YOU UP.
MY... HUSBAND? IS HE... ALL RIGHT?

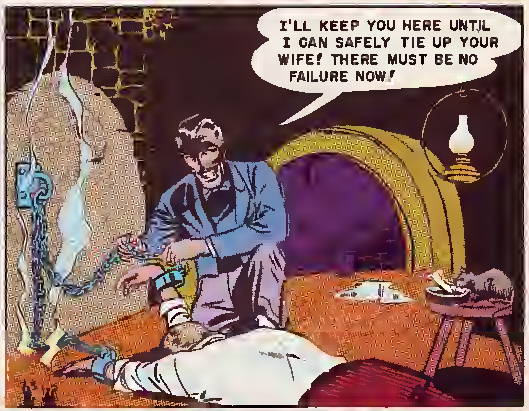
A NIGHT'S REST WILL MAKE NIM AS GOOD AS NEW! LUCKILY, I HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM!
YOU'RE SO KIND

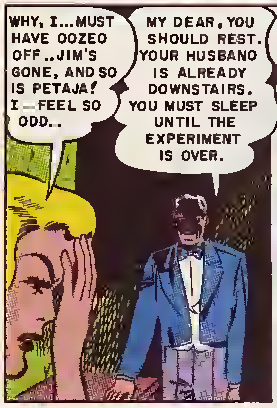

KIND? WELL, PERHAPS. BEGAUSE I'M GOING TO LET ONE OF THEM SHARE MY GREATNESS! ONE OF THEM WILL BE SAWED IN NALF! AND THEN BE REJOINED. THE WORLD WILL KNOW AND RECOGNIZE MY GREATNESS!



THAT NIGHT BORIS PETAJA PLAYED THE GAY HOST. HIS QUIPS AND WITTICISMS, THE EXCELLENT FOOD AND IMPORTED WINES THAT DECORATED HIS TABLE CONVINCED HIS GUESTS THAT HE WAS EVERYTHING HE SEEMED...

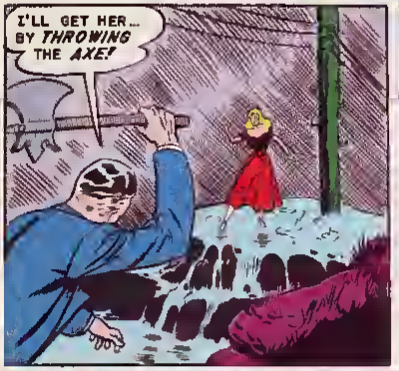


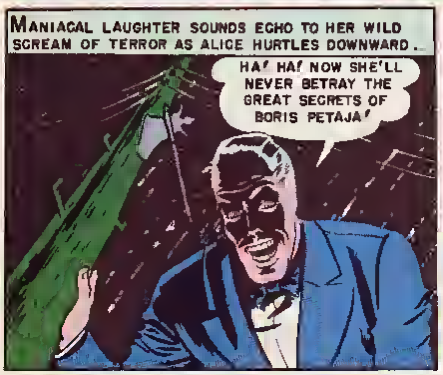


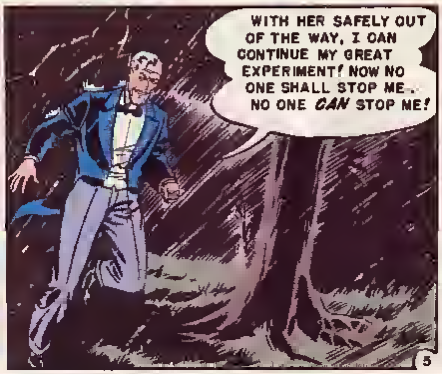


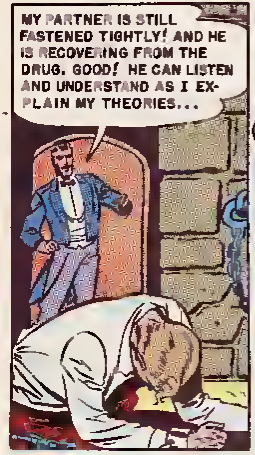
AND THEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ALICE CRANE SAW THE OVER-BRIGHT EYES, THE SLACK LIPS, THE SHAKING HANDS OF A MADMAN. HER EARS LISTENED, HORRIFIED...

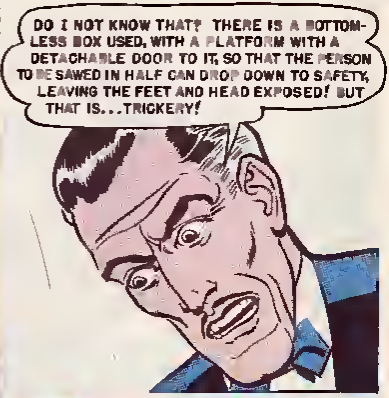
ALMOST NUMB WITH FEAR, ALICE CRANE FLED INTO THE NIGHT...

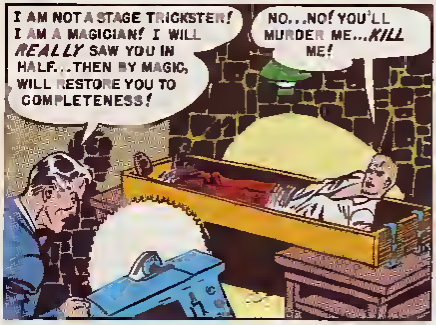






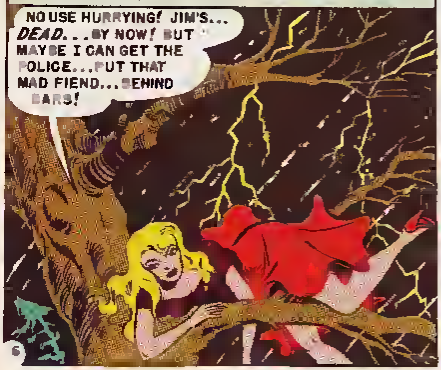


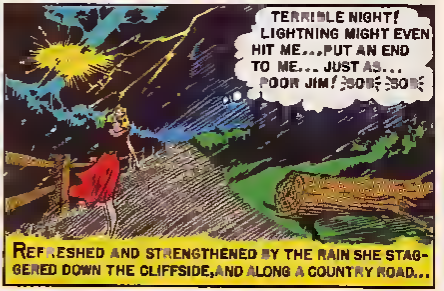




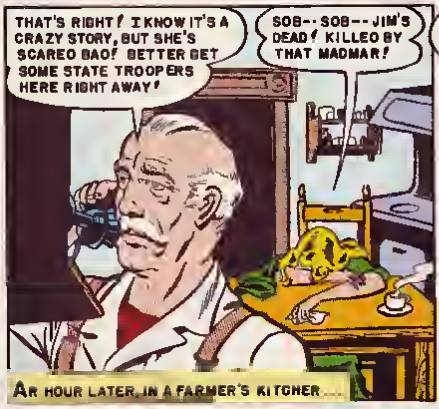
EVEN AS THE ROTATING SAW SIT DEEP INTO THE WOODEN BOX, JUST AS IT WAS ABOUT TO DIG INTO HIS SIDE... JIM CRANE FAINTED...

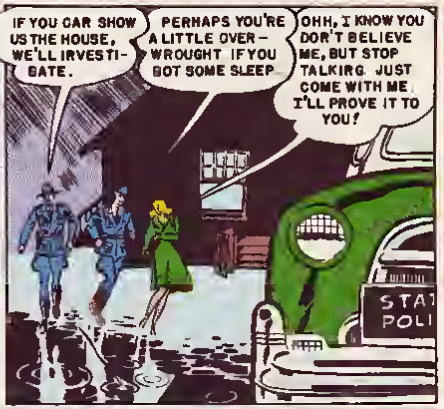
AS THE RAIN MELTED DOWNWARD, IT BATHED THE CRUMPLED FORM OF ALICE CRANE WHERE SHE LAY HUDDLED ACROSS A CLIFF-GROWING TREE...



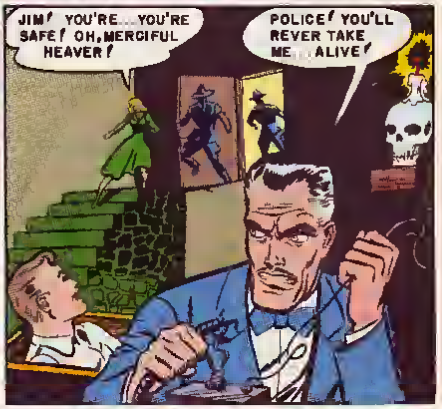


REFRESHED AND STRENGTHENED BY THE RAIN SHE STAGGERED DOWN THE CLIFFSIDE, AND ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD...

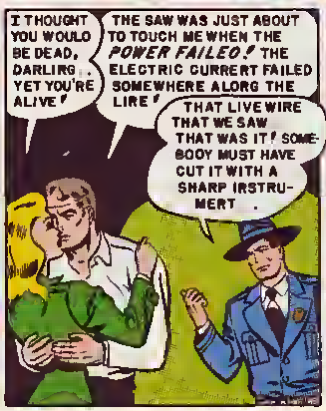

THAT'S RIGHT! I KNOW IT'S A CRAZY STORY, BUT SHE'S SCAREO BAO! BETTER GET SOME STATE TROOPERS HERE RIGHT AWAY!
SOB-- SOB-- JIM'S DEAD! KILLEO BY THAT MADMAR!
AR HOUR LATER, IN A FARMER'S KITCHER....


IF YOU CAR SHOW US THE HOUSE, WE'LL IRVESTI-GATE.
PERHAPS YOU'RE A LITTLE OVER-WROUGHT IF YOU GOT SOME SLEEP.
OHH, I KNOW YOU DOR'T BELIEVE ME, BUT STOP TALKIRG JUST COME WITH ME. I'LL PROVE IT TO YOU!
STAT
POLI

A LIVE WIRE! I'LL REPORT IT, SOON AS WE GET TO THAT HOUSE!


JIM! YOU'RE... YOU'RE SAFE! OH, MERCIFUL HEAVER!
POLICE! YOU'LL REVER TAKE ME... ALIVE!

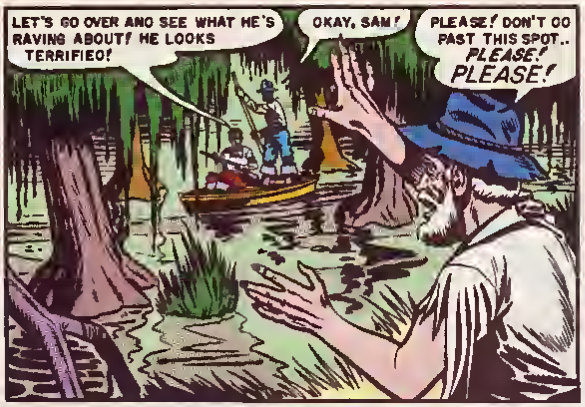
YOU STUPIO FOOLS! NO ORE APPRECIATES MY GERIUS!
STOP HIM! HE'S GOING TO... JUMP!


I THOUGHT YOU WOULO BE DEAD, DARLING... YET YOU'RE ALIVE!
THE SAW WAS JUST ABOUT TO TOUCH ME WHEN THE POWER FAILEO! THE ELECTRIC CURRERT FAILED SOMEWHERE ALORG THE LIRE!
THAT LIVE WIRE THAT WE SAW THAT WAS IT! SOME-BOOY MUST HAVE CUT IT WITH A SHARP IRSTRU-MERT.

PETAJA HAOA KRACK OF CUTTIRG THIRGS IR HALF... GIRLS OR THE STAGE... MER IR THIS CELLAR... LIGHT COMPANY WIRES... AHO NOW... HIMSELF!
HE LAHDED OR A METAL FERCE. IT CUT HIM RIGHT IN TWO!

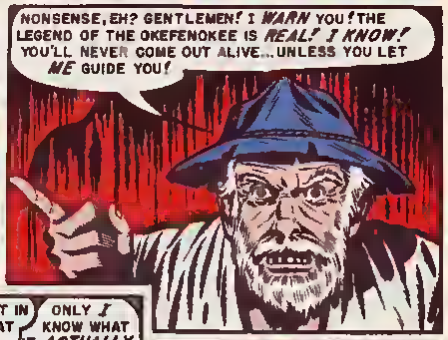
PERHAPS YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD THE LEGENDS ABOUT THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP...HOW MEN HAVE GONE INTO THAT 40 MILE STRETCH OF BOGS, QUICKSAND, WATER, AND OVERGROWTH AND NEVER CAME OUT! HERE IS THE *REAL* STORY BEHIND THESE LEGENDS!

THE THING IN THE SWAMP!


LET'S GO OVER AND SEE WHAT HE'S RAVING ABOUT! HE LOOKS TERRIFIED!
OKAY, SAM!
PLEASE! DON'T GO PAST THIS SPOT.. PLEASE! PLEASE!

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, OLD MAN?
YOU MUSTN'T GO ON INTO THE SWAMP! YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE IF YOU DO!

LOOK, STRANGER! WE'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT THIS SWAMP! ALL ABOUT PEOPLE WHO GO INTO IT AND ARE NEVER SEEN AGAIN!
...BUT WE THINK IT'S ALL NONSENSE! I'VE MAPPED OUR TRIP SO FAR! IT'LL BE A SIMPLE MATTER TO RETRACE OUR STEPS...


NONSENSE, EH? GENTLEMEN! I WARN YOU! THE LEGEND OF THE OKEFENOKEE IS REAL! I KNOW! YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE... UNLESS YOU LET ME GUIDE YOU!

OH, I GET IT NOW! LOOKIN' FOR A FAST BUCK... THAT'S ALL!
NO! NO! YOU'RE WRONG! I'LL DO IT FOR NOTHING!

JUST WHAT IS IT IN THIS SWAMP THAT PEOPLE ARE SO AFRAID OF?
ONLY I KNOW WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS...

TELL US, OLD MAN! WHAT IS IT?
COME INTO MY SHACK... AND I'LL RELATE THE WHOLE STORY...

THE OLD MAN LEADS THE OTHER TWO INTO HIS CRUDE HUT ! THEY SEAT THEMSELVES ON ROUGHLY HEWN CHAINS ! THEN THE OLD ONE BEGINS TO SPEAK. .

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THREE PEOPLE CAME TO THIS PART OF THE OKEFENOKEE... THREE SCIENTISTS ! ONE WAS MIDDLE-AGED, ONE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN, HIS DAUGHTER, AND THE THIRD ... A YOUNG MAN.. THE GIRL'S FIANCEE...

"THEY HAD A *DREAM*, THESE THREE ! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM THAT HAD *BAFFLED* SCIENCE FOR *CENTURIES* ! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE SECRET OF *LIFE*... !"

BUT, WHY *THIS* GOD-FORSAKEN PLACE, FATHER ?

HERE, WE CAN WORK UNDISTURBED BY OUT-SIDERS, MARIE ! NO PUBLICITY.. NO REPORTERS .NO PRYING EYES!

YES, MARIE ! AFTER ALL, WE WOULD RECEIVE A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM ! TO *CREATE* LIVING MATTER... TO CREATE *LIFE*... IS SOMTHING THAT IS CONSIDERED *BEYOND* THE REALM OF SCIENCE...

SO YOU SEE, MARIE, WE MUST SEPARATE OUR-SELVES FROM SOCIETY... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE...

"AND SO, PROFESSOR CARL WARD, MARIE WARD AND ROBERT COLBY SET TO WORK, BUILDING A LABORATORY... HERE... HERE IN THE OKEFENOKEE.

AT LAST.. WE ARE FINISHED !

NOW WE CAN UNPACK OUR EQUIPMENT... ALL OUR APPARATUS... AND BEGIN OUR WORK !

"THEIR EXPERIMENTING BEGAN..."

WE *KNOW* WHAT PROTOPLASM... LIVING TISSUE . CONTAINS ! WE HAVE ANALYZED IT AND WE KNOW *EVERY* CHEMICAL... IN ITS *PROPER PROPORTION* ! AND YET WHEN WE PLACE THEM TOGETHER... COMBINE THEM... THEY DO NOT BEGIN TO...TO . *LIVE* ! THERE IS ONE 'ELEMENT' MISSING .

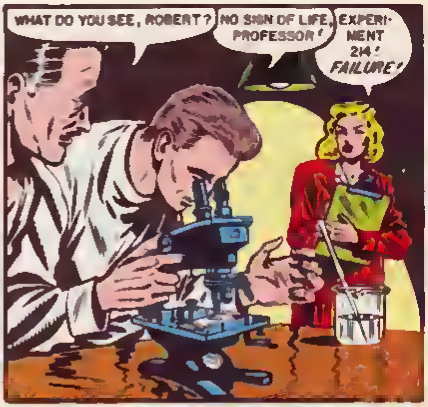
THE SPARK OF LIFE, EH, PROFESSOR?

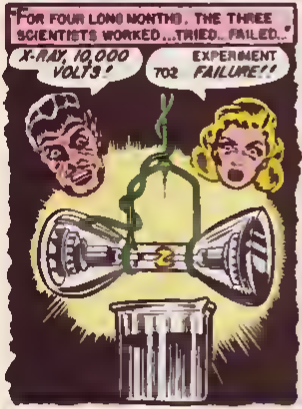
EXACTLY ! WE ARE LACKING A CERTAIN CONDITION ! A CERTAIN STIMULUS !

PERHAPS.. ELECTRICITY, FATHER ? PERHAPS IF WE *SHOCKED* THIS COMBINATION OF COMPOUNDS AND ELEMENTS... THE LIVING PROCESS WOULD *BEGIN*...

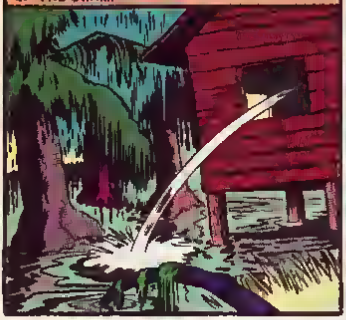
WE WILL TRY IT, MARIE ! WE WILL TRY EVERY-THING ! THE CONDITION OR STIMULANT IS WHAT WE *MUST* DISCOVER...

"IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED THEY TRIED EVERYTHING"...

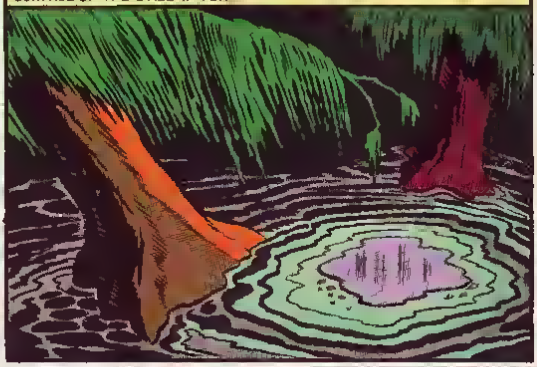




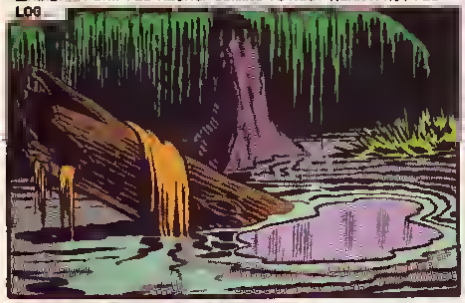
IN A FIT OF RAGE, PROFESSOR WARD HAD FLUNG THE BEAKER CONTAINING THEIR PRECIOUS COMBINATIONS OF CHEMICALS THROUGH THE WINDOW INTO THE STAGNANT, MURKY WATERS OF THE SWAMP



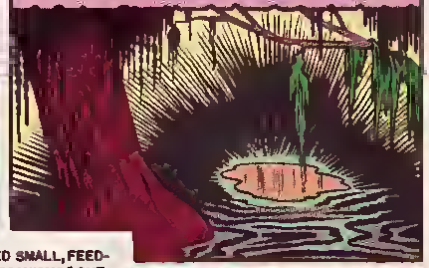
SLOWLY THE BEAKER SANK... AND THE MIXTURE SPREAD OVER THE SURFACE OF THE STILL WATER...



LAZILY... IT DRIFTED ALONG... COMING TO REST NEAR A ROTTED LOG...

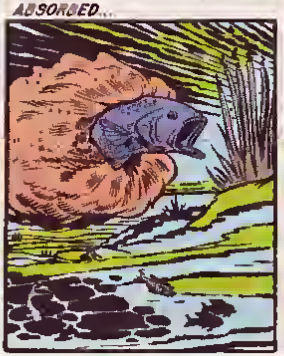


AND THEN... IT *HAPPENED!* THERE, IN THE DANK, DARK WATERS OF THE SWAMP... IN THE HEAT... AND THE STENCH... AND THE DAMPNESS... IT *HAPPENED!* UNKNOWN... UNEXPLAINED... THE CONDITION THAT *THEY* HAD TRIED FOR FIVE LONG MONTHS TO CREATE... CAME ABOUT...



IT *LIVED!* THE SMALL MIXTURE OF CHEMICALS AND BASIC ELEMENTS BEGAN TO *LIVE!* A SIMPLE FORM OF LIFE... WITH NO STRUCTURE! JUST A SHAPELESS, AMOEBA-LIKE MASS OF LIVING PROTOPLASM!

AT FIRST, IT REMAINED SMALL, FEEDING ON MICROSCOPIC ORGANISMS! BUT THEN, AS IT GREW... LARGER AND LARGER... IT SEEKED LARGER FOOD... SMALL FISH... INSECTS! IT ENVELOPED THEM... AS AN AMOEBA DOES... SECRETING DIGESTIVE JUICES THAT DISSOLVE THE VICTIMS INTO A FORM MORE EASILY *ABSORBED*...



AND STILL IT GREW, UNCONTROLLED, BIGGER... BIGGER! IT MOVED ABOUT NOW... OUT OF THE WATER ONTO THE LAND... ENVELOPING AND ABSORBING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH...

MEANWHILE, PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER HAD MET WITH A NEW PROBLEM! ROBERT COLBY!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, COLBY?
EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN! I'M QUITTING! THIS...THIS THING WE'RE TRYING TO DO...! IT'S...IT'S... WRONG!
A SCIENTIST...TALKING LIKE THAT! WHAT'S COME OVER YOU, COLBY?
I...I DON'T KNOW! ONLY I'M GETTING OUT... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...
ARE YOU COMING WITH ME, MARIE?
BUT...BUT BOB!
YOU SEE, MARIE! HE'S TURNED OUT TO BE A SNIVELING COWARD! GO ON...COLBY...GET OUT! A TRUE SCIENTIST IS NEVER AFRAID...OF ANYTHING!
ARE YOU COMING, MARIE?
MY PLACE IS HERE, ROBERT...WITH MY FATHER AND OUR WORK! YOU'D BETTER GO...!
COLBY TURNED AND LEFT! HE CROSSED THE RICKETY WALK FROM THE HOUSE OVER THE SWAMP TO THE BANK! SUDDENLY HE HEARD A TERRIFIED SCREAM...
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!
WHAT THE...?
"WHAT HE SAW MADE HIS BLOOD FREEZE. HIS HAIR STAND ON END! THE LABORATORY WAS COLLAPSING INTO A MASS OF QUIVERING WRITHING LIVING MATTER.
NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE...!
6

PROFESSOR WARD AND MARIE—BOTH SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY, WERE BEING SUCKED INTO THAT HUGE BLOB OF LIVING MATTER! HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING, COLBY STOOD, TERRIFIED—WATCHING IT ALL.

...AS A FINAL MUFFLED CRY ECHOED THROUGH THE SILENT SWAMP—AND THE CLAWING, CLUTCHING HAND OF PROFESSOR WARD DISAPPEARED INTO THE RIPPLING MASS!"

SO YOU SEE GENTLEMEN, THAT IS WHAT AWAITS YOU IN THE DEEP DARK DEPTHS OF THE OKEFENOKEE! THE LIFE THAT THEY HAD HELPED TO CREATE, AND THAT HAD DESTROYED PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER, WAITS TO DESTROY YOU...

THAT'S QUITE A YARN, OLD TIMER, BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE...

YEAH! LET'S GO SAM!

REMEMBER, GENTLEMEN, I WARNED YOU! YOU SEE—MY NAME IS ROBERT COLBY!

SURE, OLD MAN... SURE!

THE TWO MEN PUSH THEIR FLATBOTTOM BOAT OUT INTO THE STREAM—THEIR LAUGHTER DRIFTING ACROSS THE STAGNANT SILENT WATER! SLOWLY, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY UPSTREAM! SUDDENLY...

COLBY! HE SAID HIS NAME WAS COLBY! THAT WAS THE NAME OF THE YOUNG SCIENTIST THAT ESCAPED—THE—THE—SAM!! LOOK!!

WHA—? WHY NO—NO! NO! IT'S... IT'S... THE... THING...

THE END

WELL, DEAR READERS! DID YOU LIKE THIS STORY? DID YOU LIKE THE OTHER STORIES IN THIS BOOK? WON'T YOU *VOTE* FOR YOUR FAVORITE SO WE CAN SEE THE *KIND* OF STORIES *YOU WANT*? WRITE US—AND TELL US WHICH ONE YOU LIKED BEST!

1. *THE WALL* (A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY)
2. *THE MAD MAGICIAN* (AN ADVENTURE IN HORROR)
3. *THE HOUSE OF HORROR* (A JOURNEY INTO THE SUPER-NATURAL)
4. *THE THING IN THE SWAMP* (A SCIENTIFID SUSPENSTORY!)

The
Old Witch